

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EA Number: AZ-410-2005-0012
Case File No.: Bullgap Community Allotment #4617
Applicant: Jon Stevens
BLM Office: Safford Field Office
Project: Saddle Water Tank #5640
Location of Proposed Action: T. 05S, R. 28E, sec 33 SW ¼ NW ¼
EA Team Leader: Michelle Cox

Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plan

This proposed action is subject to the following land use plan:

Name of Plan:

Safford District Resource Management Plan (RMP)

Date Approved:

Safford District RMP Approved Record of Decision (ROD) Part I 9/1992, and Part II 7/1994

This proposed action has been reviewed to determine if it conforms with applicable land use plan as required by 43 CFR 1610.5. The Safford District RMP incorporated the Upper Gila/San Simon Grazing ES, 9/1978. The Following applies:

GM57 - The Upper Gila San Simon Grazing ES page 1-29 states in part, “Water developments will be located to provide adequate distribution of water for livestock and big game wildlife species. Specifications for these developments are found on page 1-29 of the Final EIS and are summarized as follows: ... 4) Where possible , water catchments and pipelines will be located to take advantage of screening topography and vegetation, ... 7) Storage tanks and troughs will be painted to blend with the surrounding natural earth and vegetation colors. ...”.

GM01 - The Upper Gila-San Simon Grazing Environmental Impact Statement was completed in 1978 and its decisions have been implemented since then. Monitoring studies are in place and analysis indicates that rangeland condition is improving under the present management. Present management has the flexibility to modify grazing levels and seasons where necessary. In addition, the Eastern Arizona Grazing Environmental Impact Statement was completed in 1987 and the decisions made in that document are beginning to be implemented. The grazing decisions are incorporated by reference. RMP page 12 (ROD page 1).

Purpose/Need for Proposed Action

The purpose of the Saddle Water Tank project is to improve resource condition in response to the drought. The tank was installed to improve livestock distribution and to supplement existing waters to avoided areas of concentrated use. The project was a 30 day categorical exclusion project that needs to be approved as a permanent project.

Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action: One 2,000 gallon enclosed poly water tank is located 20 feet from the road. A drinker is 50 feet beyond the tank and away from the road. (See Map) The tank is connected to an existing pipeline from Goat Camp so no pipeline will be installed except the extension of the above ground trough line.

No Action Alternative: No tank installed.

Environmental Impacts

Scoping/Screening Session: Date: December 20, 2004 the Safford Field Office NEPA team completed and interdisciplinary review of the proposed action.

Issues Identified in Scoping:

1. Cultural resource impacts/disturbances.
2. Availability of the water to wildlife.
3. Potential socio-economic impact.

<u>Critical Element:</u>	<u>Affected</u>		<u>Critical Element:</u>	<u>Affected</u>	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
	(check)			(check)	
Air Quality	—	<u>X</u>	T&E An. Species	—	<u>X</u>
ACECs	—	<u>X</u>	T&E Plant Species	—	<u>X</u>
Cultural Resources	—	<u>X</u>	VRM	—	<u>X</u>
Flood Plains	—	<u>X</u>	Water Quality	—	<u>X</u>
Hazardous Materials	—	<u>X</u>	Wetlands/Riparian	—	<u>X</u>
Nat. Amer. Rel.	—	<u>X</u>	Wild & Scenic River	—	<u>X</u>
Prime/Unique frmlnd	—	<u>X</u>	Wilderness	—	<u>X</u>
Solid Waste	—	<u>X</u>	Noxious/Invasive	—	<u>X</u>
Environ. Justice	—	<u>X</u>	plants	—	<u>X</u>
Socio-Economic	—	<u>X</u>	Other	—	<u>X</u>

Description of Impacts

Proposed Action: The black tank and trough pipeline extension will be placed in a previously disturbed area. It has been in place on a temporary basis. Livestock use has been identified as an appropriate use in this area. The drinker will be placed on the east side of the saddle to reduce visibility and move livestock away from the road. The tank will be connected to an existing pipeline. Both the short-term and long-term impacts on soil and vegetation of the cattle being concentrated in this area would not keep the resources from meeting these objectives. Utilization and other livestock/forage objectives have been established through the Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration and the Safford District RMP to aid livestock management.

Answers regarding the issues raised during scoping:

1. Cultural survey was completed on December 15, 2004. No effect found, and standard stipulations attached.
2. The proposed action would provide water facilities for wildlife with safety escapes.
3. A water inventory, to include pictures will be completed when the project is completed.
4. There would be no significant socio-economic impact.

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, no tank would be installed. The tank will be removed and the disturbed area would be left to revegetate. The cattle will be more concentrated in areas of the allotment with available water.

Cumulative Impacts

Proposed Action: There would be no new disturbances during the placement of the tank and minimal disturbance for the relocation of the trough. There are no other planned range

improvements over the next five years that would result in cumulative impacts. Tank covers will be added to steel rim tanks to reduce evaporation and pumping.

No Action Alternative: The cattle would not be able to utilize this area. The tank will be removed and the disturbed area would be left to revegetate. The cattle will be more concentrated in areas of the allotment with available water.

Mitigating Measures and Residual Impacts

Mitigating Measures:

Cultural: No significant cultural resources will be impacted as a result of the proposed action.

Standard stipulations will be included.

Wildlife: Wildlife will be provided water and cover as a result of this project.

Persons/Agencies Consulted

Permittees: Jon Stevens

Dan McGrew, Safford Field Office Archeologist

Delbert Molitor, Safford Field Office Hydrologist

Marlo Draper, Safford Field Office Planning and Environmental Coordinator

Tom Schnell, Safford Field Office Natural Resource Specialist

Doug Powers, Safford Field Office Biologist

Russell Fox, Safford Field Office Weed Coordinator

Ted McRae, Safford Field Office Riparian Specialist,

Philip Cooley, Safford Field Office Rangeland Management Specialist Team Lead

Michelle Cox, Safford Field Office Rangeland Management Specialist

Preparer(s): Michelle Cox

Date: 12/20/2004

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION RECORD

EA Number: AZ-410-2005-0012
Case File No.: Bullgap Community Allotment #4617
Applicant: Jon Stevens
BLM Office: Safford Field Office
Project: Marlo DraperSaddle Water Tank #5640
Location of Proposed Action: T. 05S, R. 28E, sec 33 SW ¼ NW ¼
EA Team Leader: Michelle Cox

Decision Record:

It is my decision to implement the proposed action for the construction of the Saddle Water Tank in T. 05S, R. 28E, sec 33 SW ¼ NW ¼, Gila and Salt River Meridian. Given the impacts identified in the environmental assessment (EA: AZ-410-2005-0012), the mitigation measures identified for visual, wildlife, hydrology, and cultural will be implemented. The other resources either had no effect, requiring no mitigation, or minimal effect or required no mitigation. The No Action alternative was not selected, as it does not adequately meet the applicant's needs, nor is it adequate given the environmental or economic impacts identified.

The rationale for this decision is such that it does not conflict with the Safford District Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement and is consistent with and authorized under the Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and 43 CFR 4300. The issues that are identified are not significant and are mitigated sufficiently given the potential impact.

Finding of No Significant Impact:

I have reviewed the Saddle Water Tank Environmental Assessment (EA: AZ-410-2005-0012) including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant impacts. I have determined that the proposed action with the mitigation described below will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required. I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the approved land use plan (Safford District RMP). It is my decision to implement the project with the mitigation measures identified below.

Mitigation Measures/Remarks:

1. Visual: The water tank is black and will be painted brown. The trough will be moved to reduce its impact from the road.
2. Cultural: No significant cultural resources will be impacted as a result of the proposed action. Standard stipulations will be included, and adhered to.
3. Wildlife: Wildlife will be provided water as a result of this project

<u>/s/Tom Schnell</u>	<u>2/18/05</u>
Acting	Date
Assistant Field Office Manager for	
Resource Use and Protection	